

Curtains & Caricatures

A Saha Collection



@ The Dome, Heritage Centre



Heritage Centre
IIT Madras



A Heritage Centre Exhibition

Curtains & Caricatures

A Saha Collection

Who is Saha?

C. V. Sahasranamam

Popularly known as SAHA

**Alumnus of the second batch of IIT Madras;
Mechanical Engineering**

1965 Batch

Popularly known for his caricature contributions to the *Campastimes*, a student run newsletter, during the early decades of the institute and participation in dramatics during his time at IITM

Saha did his formal schooling in Kerala. His high school instruction was in the vernacular language. He learnt Sanskrit for a total of 7 years during his school days and English for a year during his PUC. Saha was in the merit list of the Kerala State Board and was hence automatically selected to attend IIT Madras. He joined IITM in 1965 (second batch). At that time the hostels had not been completed and all the students stayed in the ground floor of Cauvery hostel. During his time at IITM, Saha was an active participant in a number of activities on campus, including hockey, NCC, dramatics and caricaturing for articles published in Campastimes.

What is this exhibition about?

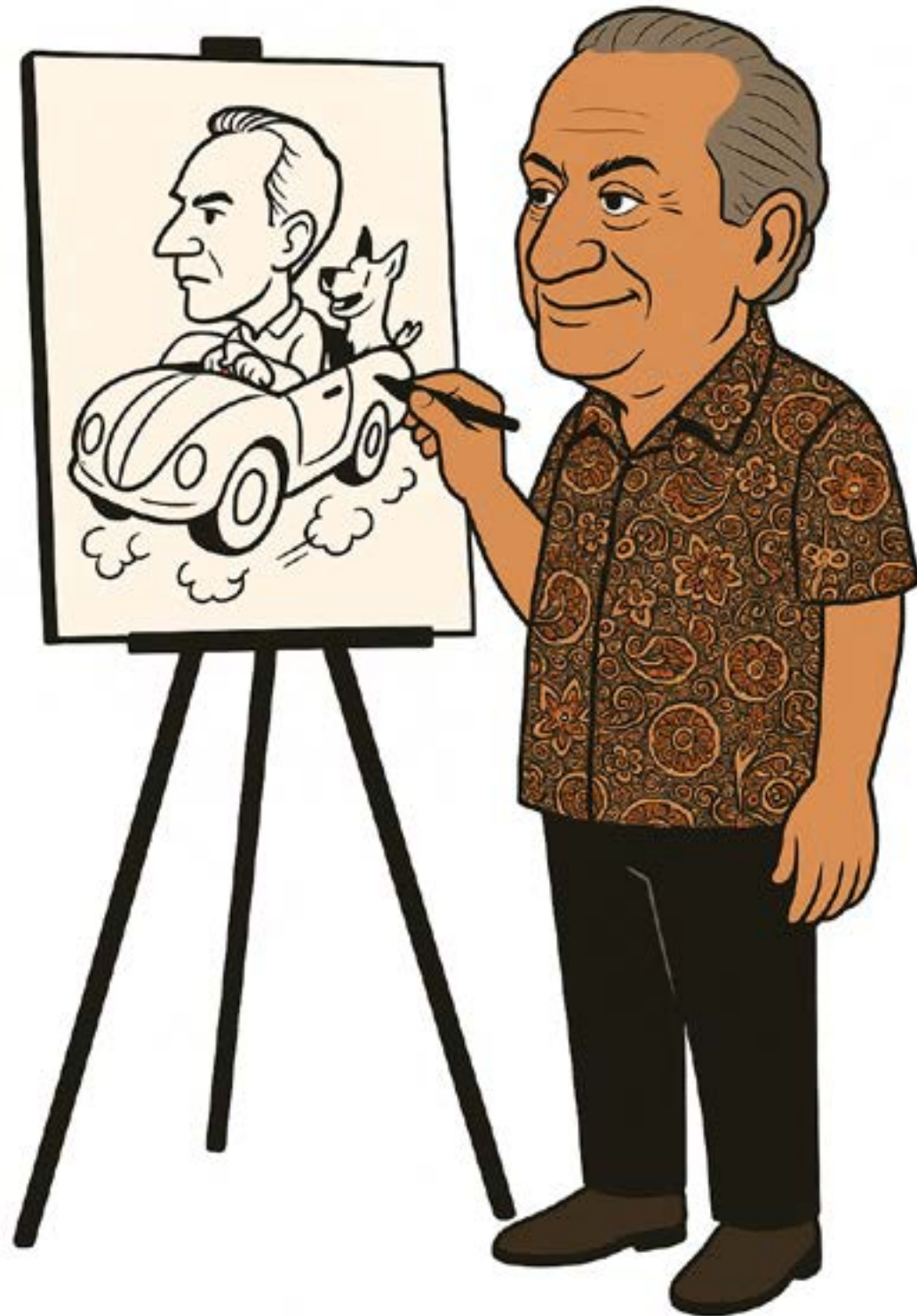
Saha graduated from IIT Madras 60 years ago. This exhibition is an ode to Saha's contribution to the heritage of IIT Madras. Photographs from the Heritage Centre's photographic archive highlighting Saha's participation in the dramatics of the Institute Day plays in a women's attire and his caricatures for *Campastimes* and other art are on display at this exhibition.



Heritage Centre
IIT Madras



Caricatures



Mr. Saha was an avid cartoonist during his college days. He caricatured some of the most prominent administrative and academic figures of IIT Madras for the student-run magazine Campastimes. Beyond that, he also created delightful caricatures of cricketers and his friends from IITM.

Mr. Saha had no formal education in artistry and caricaturing. His work was spontaneous.

Prof. B. Sengupto



Story behind the caricature

This caricature/comic depicts Prof. B. Sengupto as baby Krishna telling his mother that he only took the scum and not the cream. This was a humorous take on a statement that the then Director made angrily in response to a student strike.

The Director had said 'You people, you think you are the cream of the India high school system. You are not the cream, you are the scum. They both rise to the top.'

Aside from this humourous incident Saha, remembers Prof. Sengupto and his wife as warm people. He recalls Mrs. Sengupto offering to teach him Rabindra Sangeet (Tagore songs) and inviting Saha and his friends home.

Designation
First Director of IIT Madras

Caricature found in Campastimes issue dated
15 February 1963



Dr. Nikolaus Klein

Story behind the caricature

Saha, during his school days, had learnt Sanskrit for a total of 7 years. Upon joining IIT Madras, he was delighted to hear that it was mandatory for students to learn German.

Further, Klein had done his doctorate in Sanskrit literature. While teaching German grammar he would draw comparisons with Sanskrit grammar and by doing so, he was pointing out the synergy between the two languages.

Saha recalls Klein's kindness during a time when he was unwell and in hospital. He fondly remembers Klein visiting him in hospital and allowing him to stay at his home until he recovered.

The caricature of Klein shows the professor on the kerb with a crashed car near him. He had had a minor accident.



Designation
Professor of German

Caricature found in Campastimes special issue
7 years of Campastimes



Prof. Krishnamurthy



Designation
Head of Humanities Department

Caricature found in Campastimes issue dated
15 October 1962

Story behind the caricature

Mr. Saha remembers Prof. Krishnamurthi as dynamic and full of enthusiasm.

Back then it was mandatory for the students to learn humanities subjects and German for a year, and the classes were held at AC Tech or at the Central Highway Workshop.

Saha's batch studied Pygmalion, by Geogre Bernard Shaw, and Prof. Krishnamurthi would role play the characters of Professor Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle and effortlessly switch between them.

The caricature features Prof. Krishnamurthi in a kimono (traditional Japanese women's clothing) as he had recently visited Japan at that time.



R. Natarajan



Story behind the caricature

Mr. R. Natarajan was the first Registrar of IIT Madras. Saha remembers him as an avid cricket fan who followed the game closely.

Around the time this caricature was made, the Australian cricket team had come down to Chennai for a test match, and cricket fever was running high in the city.

The caricature features Mr. R. Natarajan as a batsman. Aside from his interest in cricket, he was also a good commentator and could give excellent running commentary.

Saha recalls a time when the Nawab of Pataudi (Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi) was the chief guest at the Saidapet hostel. During his stay, Saha made a radio frequency transmitter and transmitted an interview of Pataudi at an appointed time so that all the hostel radios could receive it. Saha enjoyed caricaturing cricketers too.

Designation
First Registrar of IIT Madras

Caricature found in Campastimes issue dated
15 February 1963



Dr. Wolfgang Scheer

Story behind the caricature

Prof. Wolfgang Scheer was a professor of Mechanical Engineering whose presence on campus and classroom seemed to have both entertained and frightened the students equally.

Although many of his quirks were remembered by the students, the one that seems to have had the biggest impact on Saha was to do with Scheer's Volkswagen.

This caricature created by Saha shows Scheer in a speeding car, accompanied by his dog. According to Saha this was a scene that the students used to witness daily due to the non-existent speed limit on campus in the early days of the Institute.



Designation
Professor of Mechanical Engineering
Caricature found in Campastimes issue dated
15 July 1963



Anand Singh Bawa

Mr. Anand Singh Bawa has announced his resignation as editor of Campastimes.



Designation
First Editor of Campastimes

Caricature found in Campastimes issue dated
15 July 1963

Story behind the caricature

Anand Singh Bawa was the first Editor of Campastimes, the student-run newsletter that Saha's caricatures featured in.

Saha and the Campastimes team were all residents of the same hostel. Saha recalls that while his job was primarily to accompany Vikram Rao (a fellow batchmate and Campastimes colleague) while he conducted interviews for the Campastimes articles, Bawa was the backbone behind Campastimes with the support of Nikolaus Klein (professor of German).

Saha also recalls that Campastimes was printed on a small press and that the team had to travel a long distance to get the newsletter printed.



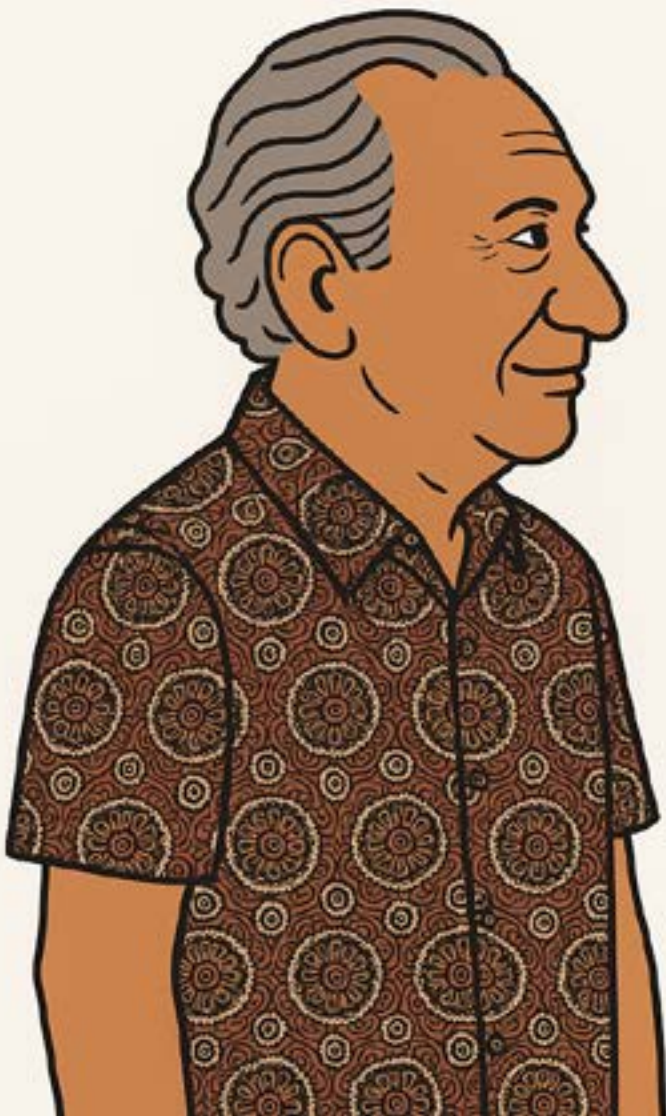
Dramatics

Mr. Saha's interest went beyond caricaturing.

He participated in dramatics during Institute Day (1962, 1963 and 1965). The role that he played during these dramas was that of a woman.

The play he acted in along with his classmates was a Tamil play written by K. Balachander (Indian playwright and film director). This play was a musical drama and Saha, playing a woman, had to mimic a woman's voice and sing in the same voice.

His acting earned him an award during the event which he received from the Director's wife, Mrs. B. Sengupto. The play was also enacted in Delhi during the National Youth Festival.



The Institute Day of IIT Madras is a day marked to celebrate and recognize the hard work and success of people who have shown excellence in academics as well as extracurricular activities. It was also called Gymkhana Day or Annual Day. After the conferment of prizes, a series of entertainment programmes were presented to commemorate the ceremony.

Dances, magic shows, plays, music performances and various cultural activities were a hallmark of Institute Day in the 1960s. It was a community event which brought together students, professors and staff members of IIT, children from Vanavani School, campus children and other residents of the campus.



Event: Third Institute Day
Year: 1962

Mr. Saha receives an award from Mrs. Shanti Sengupto

Seen in the image from the left: Mrs. Shanti Sengupto (Director's wife) hands over a prize to Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam. Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam's make-up from the skit he just performed a woman role in is intact but he has changed out of his costume to collect his award.

The Third Institute Day took place at the Institute's Building Sciences Block on the IITM campus.



Event: Third Institute Day

Year: 1962

Students performing the drama 'Rajamani' for the audience on the Third Institute Day

Seen in the image from the left: Mr. S. M. Krishna, Mr. K. V. Rangawami, Mr. Natesan and Mr. Sahasranamam (playing the role of the woman).

The Third Institute Day took place at the Institute's Building Sciences Block on the IITM campus.



Event: Fourth Institute Day

Year: 1963

Students perform the drama 'If It Were To Happen' during the Fourth Institute Day

Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam (Mechanical Engineering Department, 1960-65) played the lady character in the play, while Mr. S. M. Krishnan (Mechanical Engineering Department, 1961-66) played the hero in the play. The man with an umbrella is possibly Mr. K. V. Rangaswami (Civil Engineering Department, 1960-65), and the person peeping out from behind the curtain is possibly Mr. Sriram.

Identification by Mr. K. Narayanan, Electrical Engineering Department, 1963-66

According to the 15 April 1963 edition of Campastimes, the entertainment programme consisted of a German sketch, an English drama, a Tamil play and a Malayalam shadow-play. According to this report the Open Air Theatre was jam packed with around 4000 people.



Event: Sixth Institute Day
Year: 1965

Actors in their outfits

From left, standing, a gentleman (yet to be identified), Mr. T. K. Ramakrishna, Mr. T. N. Venkataraman (Chief Security Officer), a gentleman (yet to be identified) and Mr. Srinivasan (Physical Training Instructor).

From left, seated, two actors (yet to be identified), Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam as the lady character and a gentleman (yet to be identified).



Event: Fourth Institute Day
Year: 1963

Students perform the drama 'If It Were To Happen' during the Fourth Institute Day

In this play, Mr. K. S. Krishnamurthy (Electrical Engineering Department, 1961) played the role of the scientist and Mr. Sriram (department and year yet to be determined) was the former's assistant. Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam (Mechanical Engineering Department, 1960) played the part of the lady character and Mr. S. M. Krishnan (Mechanical Engineering Department, 1961-66) was the hero.

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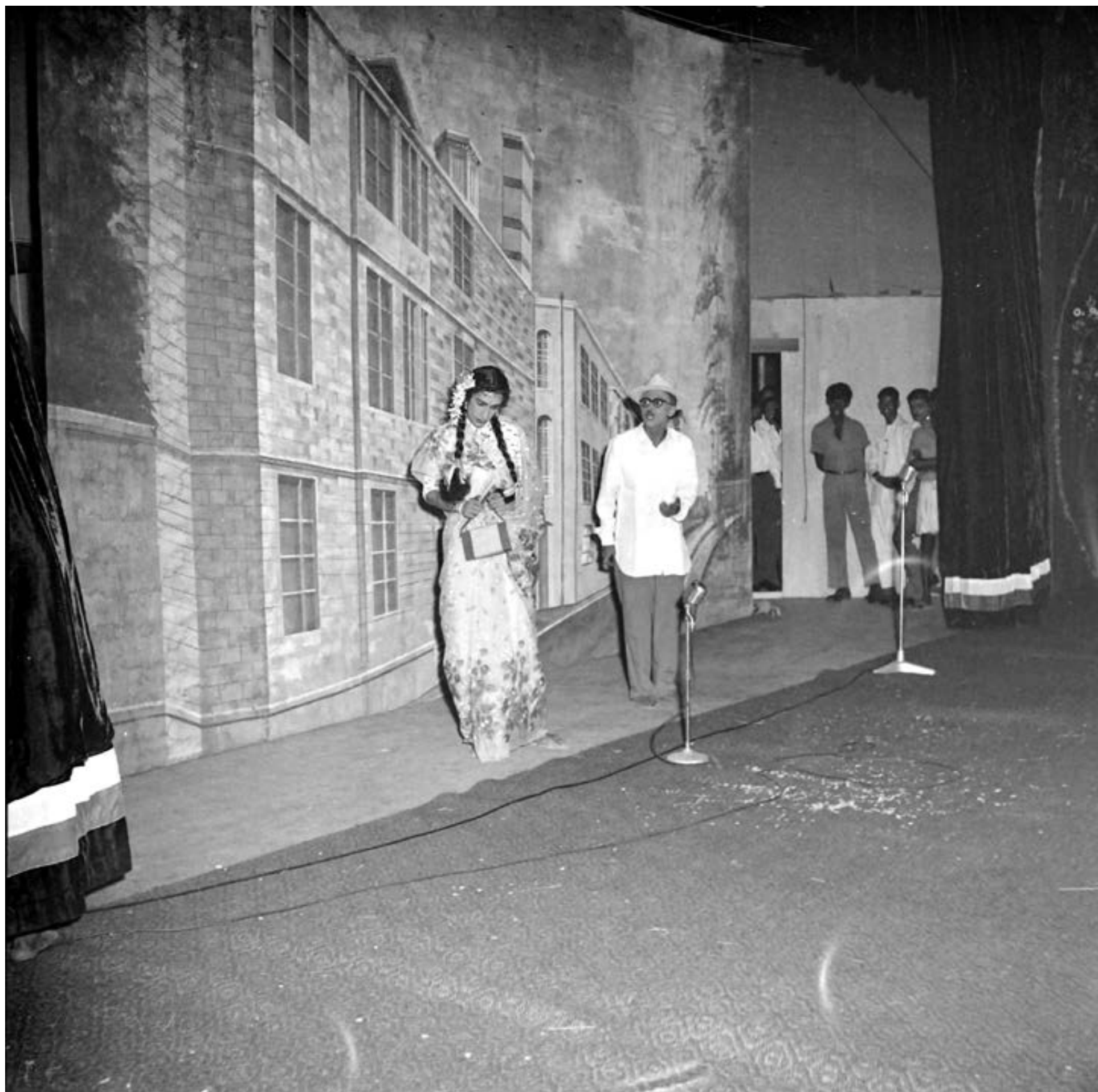


Event: Sixth Institute Day
Year: 1965

Students and staff performing a play at the Sixth Institute Day

Seen in the photograph, from left, a gentleman (yet to be identified), Mr. T. N. Venkataraman (Chief Security Officer) and Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam (playing the lady character).

It was common for male performers to don the roles of women owing to the fact that IIT Madras did not have female students in the early years. T. N. Venkataraman was an Under Officer in the U.O.T.C. Venkataraman later joined the Madras Special Armed Police, "and having had 'always a liking for the adventurous life', participated in, and led many merry hunts for dacoits, naxalites, and other Bad Guys", writes Bobo in his article 'The Security Officer', which appeared in *Campastimes* (Winter 1971 – Vol. X, No. 2).



Event: Fourth Institute Day
Year: 1963

Students perform the drama 'If It Were To Happen' during the Fourth Institute Day

In this play, Mr. C. V. Sahasranamam (Mechanical Engineering Department, 1960) played the lady character in the production.

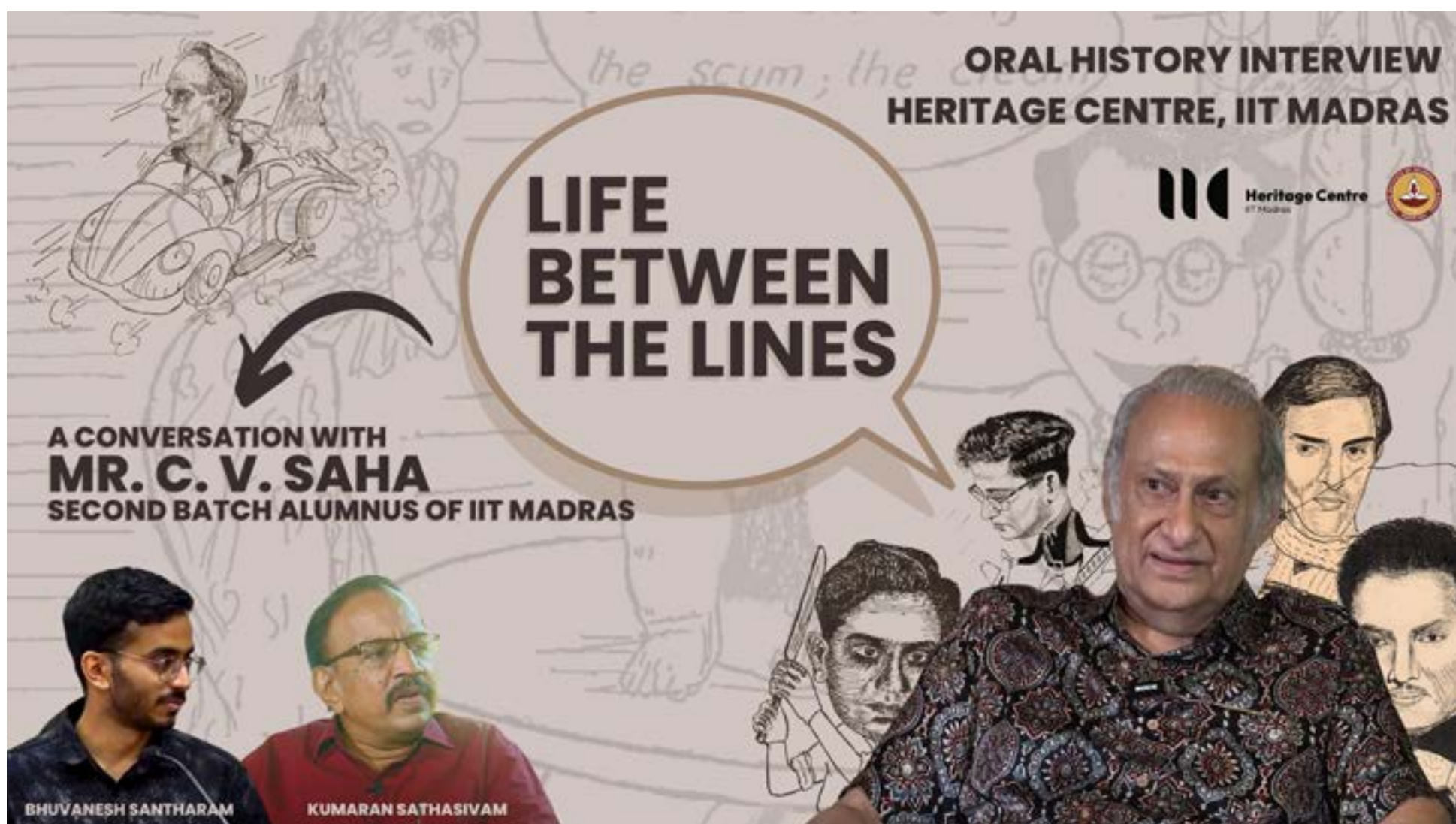
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Exhibits

Caricatures and art contributed to the Heritage Centre by Mr. Saha





**LIFE BETWEEN THE LINES:
A CONVERSATION WITH MR. C.V. SAHA, SECOND BATCH ALUMNUS OF
IIT MADRAS**

Click to watch Oral History Interview

<https://youtu.be/fPowGCoeNok?feature=shared>

Thank you.